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AUTHOR	Mangrum, Faye Gothard; Mangrum, C. W.
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ABSTRACT

A study revealed that many faculty and administrators believe most decisions are made in informal meetings that occur at times other than in the formally convened and formally conducted business meetings. The concept of meeting is expanded to include any gathering of members of an organization who assemble together informally and deliberately in an attempt to solve the problems of the organization. Brought together are small group communication theory and a language and social interaction perspective, in order to formulate a model of shared governance that draws attention to the reciprocal nature of networks of committees with the less defined and understood networks of individuals interacting with other individuals in focused gatherings to accomplish goals of shared governance. The communication model of shared governance offered in this study provides a starting point for examining informal meetings in the university setting. Contains 29 references and a figure representing the communication model. An appendix provides a sample diary entry for meetings. (EF)

The Point of Engagement in Decision Making:

A Communication Model of Shared Governance

Faye Gothard Mangrum	C. W. Mangrum
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Station A Box 4045	Station A Box 4045
Durant, OK 74701	Durant, OK 74701
fmangrum@sosu.edu	Cmangrum@sosu.edu
580-745-2558	580-745-2278
580-745-7475 Fax	580-745-7475 Fax

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Running Head: Communication Model of Shared Governance

The Point of Engagement in Decision Making:

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Because interviews and observations conducted in this study reveal that many faculty and administrators believe most decisions are made in informal meetings that occur at times other than in the formally convened and formally conducted business meetings, we expand the concept of "meeting" to include any gathering of members of an organization who assemble together informally and deliberately in an attempt to solve the problems of the organization. We bring together a small group communication theory and a language and social interaction perspective to formulate a model of shared governance that draws attention to the reciprocal nature of networks of committees with the less defined and understood networks of individuals interacting with other individuals in focused gatherings to accomplish goals of shared governance.

The Point of Engagement in Decision Making:

A Communication Model of Shared Governance:

The shared governance philosophy presents academic organizations with practices that foster collaboration among their constituencies and enables them to become "engaged campuses." One of the earliest statements on shared governance was jointly formulated in 1966 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and called for the formation of structures that show how faculty input is incorporated into decision making processes (AAUP, 1999). This statement received wide acceptance by most accrediting organizations (e. g., the North Central Association) that require faculty to have a significant role in developing and evaluating the institution's educational programs and be involved in governance through their work on committees and other institutional processes (NCA Handbook, 1997; NCA Overview, 1999).

Traditional models of management have served as the framework for creating models of governance that illustrate how universities are, or should be organized to achieve their goals (Gollattscheck, 1985; Millett, 1962). For instance the collegial model based on the participatory management philosophy specifies the use of joint committees to enhance interaction and commitment to the goals of the institution. The primary structures of the collegial model consist of university groups (e.g., administrative advisory councils, personnel review boards, and faculty senates) that make up the network of committees involved in decision processes (Palmer, 1985). According to

Wygal (1985), committees are the main tool used to promote participatory governance, especially faculty senates, and are designed to serve as the primary mechanism for faculty input on the development or modification of rules affecting the instructional programs of the college (pp. 68-69).

The goal of this project is to provide a comprehensive framework of communication processes utilized in organizations that embrace a shared governance approach to decision making. While we have spent much of the past century focusing on participating in the decision making process, we have spent little effort understanding how faculty and others engage in informal talk in hallways and in unplanned office encounters as a process of decision making. Most models of shared governance focus primarily on formal means of communicating that occur among faculty, administration, and governing boards such as the network of committees and give little attention to informal communication settings where a great deal of organizational business and problem solving is accomplished. By studying these informal encounters and the important effects they have on formal meetings in academic settings, communication can be positioned to become the focus of small group research in this new century.

Because interviews and observations conducted in this study reveal that many faculty and administrators believe most decisions are made in informal meetings that occur at times other than in the formally convened and formally conducted business meetings, we challenge the traditional conceptualization of "what is a meeting." We expand the concept of "meeting" to include any gathering of workers or members of an organization who assemble together informally and deliberately in an attempt to solve the problems of the organization. We label these gatherings as Informal Problem Solving

(IPS) Meetings (cf. Mangrum, 1996; Mangrum & Wieder, 1997; Mangrum, Wieder, & Fairley, 1998).

Based on the claim that a great deal of academic matters are conducted in IPS Meetings, we bring together a small group communication theory and a language and social interaction perspective to formulate a model of shared governance that provides a comprehensive picture of communication practices. The communication model draws attention to the reciprocal nature of networks of committees with the less defined and understood networks of individuals interacting with other individuals in focused gatherings to accomplish goals of shared governance.

Small Group Communication

Bona fide group perspective. Of special interest to this study of shared governance is the bona fide group theory that looks beyond the traditional characteristics of membership, agendas, processes, and norms of small groups to include interactions that occur outside the formal group system (Putnam & Stohl, 1996). This theory creates awareness that group members interact with other individuals from the larger organization and takes into account that these interactions have an impact on what occurs in the bona fide group. According to Putnam and Stohl (1996), a primary characteristic underlying a bona fide group is its permeable and fluid boundaries that allow members to interact with other individuals and units outside the group as if their boundaries are fluid. Each member of the group serves as a boundary spanner or as resource personnel from external units (Putnam & Stohl, 1996, p. 151). For instance, there are linkages to the group through multiple memberships, fluctuations in membership, and members who have left the group but continue to influence the group. Viewing groups as having fluid

boundaries allows one to observe the reciprocal relationship between the group and its context (Putnam & Stohl, 1996).

While the bona fide group perspective provides theoretical footing for our communication model and recognizes that individuals outside the group may influence it by providing interpretations as to what a problem may mean (Putnam & Stohl, 1996, p. 167), it does not describe the details of how people interact outside the formal group setting. Neither does the bona fide group perspective attempt to describe the features of informal meetings. To address this need, Mangrum and Wieder (1997) specified features of informal meetings and characterized the reciprocal nature of formal and informal meetings. They used the term Informal Problem Solving (IPS) Meetings to describe meetings that occur in informal places such as in small office spaces, doorways, and hallways. They suggested that IPS Meetings are not called in advance, but are assembled just as they are needed in response to a problem requiring immediate attention before someone can continue with a particular task (Mangrum, 1996; Wieder & Mangrum, 1999). While some IPS Meetings can stand alone with no connection to formal meetings, Mangrum and Wieder (1997) contended that most occur against a backdrop of meetings of many different kinds. For example, IPS Meetings may furnish the seed for ideas that are to be discussed and expanded later in formal meetings held in conference type rooms or they may be a response to an issue initiated in formal meetings. In fact, according to Mangrum, Wieder, & Fairley (1998), the gathering of information about a problem is typically performed before or after the formal meeting not during it.

Language and Social Interaction Perspective

Small group scholars traditionally conceptualize groups in terms of memberships, norms, cohesiveness, goals, and, in particular, as continuing through time (or at least potentially so). Given the fleeting, informal, and ad-hoc features of IPS "meetings," we turned instead to a more fitting description of the order of everyday interactions to describe them. We use Goffman's (1961; 1963; 1983) conceptualizations of "focused gathering" which he used to refer to any set of two or more individuals whose members include all and only those who are at the moment in one another's immediate presence. While Goffman (1961) provided a definition of unfocused gatherings as persons present who need not engage in any encounter such as a jointly sustained physical task, he suggested focused gatherings occur when people effectively agree to sustain for a time a single focus of cognitive and visual attention, as in a conversation, a board game, or a joint task sustained by a close face-to-face circle of contributors (p. 7). Given the nature of IPS Meetings, we believe "focused gatherings" more correctly conceptualizes the ad hoc, spontaneous manner of IPS Meetings in that they involve participants who have a single focus of attention and come together with co-workers in close proximity. IPS Meetings occur when workers gather together to deliberately solve the problems of the organization (Mangrum, 1996).

We also turned to Goffman's (1961) sociological comparison of social groups and focused gatherings for additional analytical footing. According to Goffman (1961), a social group may be defined as a special type of social organization. Its elements are individuals who perceive the organization as a distinct collective unity, a social entity, apart from the particular relationships that the participants may have to one another (p. 9).

The members perceive themselves as having a sense of belonging to the group (Goffman, 1961, p. 9). Social groups possess some general organizational properties that include regulation of entering and leaving; capacity for collective action; division of labor, including leadership roles; socialization function, and so forth (Goffman, 1961, p. 9). Goffman (1961) contrasted this definition of social groups to focused gatherings and argued that to call focused gatherings "meetings of the group" can easily entrap one into thinking that one is studying the group directly. He stated "there are many gatherings where an extremely full array of interaction processes occurs with only the slightest development of a sense of group" (p.11). Moreover, Goffman (1961) suggested that "strong groups [with well defined membership and purposes] [may] rarely have focused gatherings containing all their members" (p. 13). He noted that:

> A crucial attribute of focused gatherings –the participants' maintenance of continuous engrossment in the official focus of activity—is not a property of social groups in general, for most groups, unlike encounters, continue to exist apart from the occasions when members are physically together. (Goffman, 1961, p. 11).

Thus using the term "bona fide group" as used by Putnam & Stohl (1990; 1996) to conceptualize IPS provides a term for recognizing activities occur outside formal group meetings by established members of the group. It does not, however, provide us with a term for focusing on the informal meetings or in Goffman's (1961; 1963; 1983) terms "focused gatherings" of faculty, administrators, staff, and so on. For our purposes, the members of academic organizations form various social groups, and IPS meetings are their focused gatherings. Our application of Goffman's take on "gathering" to describe

the encounter or the "coming together" of individuals is a better fit. For one, it allows us to describe the ad hoc qualities of IPS meetings. According to Goffman (19), "even a few passing strangers huddled for a moment in conversation on the street and showing willingness to maintain orderly face to face interaction can be described as a trivial "ad hoc" group (p. 10). For us, similar spontaneous "huddles" or trivial "ad hoc" gatherings are a regular and significant occurrence. We argue that members of academic organizations frequently and intensely rely on gatherings that are not affiliated with a formal meeting or formal group.

Another reason that we use "focused gathering" to refer to the coming together of ad hoc IPS Meetings is that it allows us to locate their embeddedness in the organization. Viewing focused gatherings more like the meetings of individuals rather than characteristics or methods of the group allows us to show that individuals can have memberships in several groups and interact in meetings with others in the organization without attending formally convened and conducted meetings. Focused gatherings allow us to describe the relevant interaction that occurs outside formal group meetings where, according to our observations and interviews, a great deal of organizational business is conducted.

Methodological Background for the Communication Model of Shared Governance

As previously stated, our goal for this research project is to provide a realistic description of communication processes employed by organizations that embrace a shared governance philosophy. It provides a starting point for university faculty and administrators to reevaluate the importance everyday talk plays in decision making. To accomplish this goal, we conducted an ethnography-based case study of a mid-size

regional university that was involved in carrying out a re-structuring process largely influenced by requirements set by its external accrediting agency. (We refer to this university as SEU.) The case study included interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators, observations of naturally occurring interactions, and an analysis of diary entries recorded by faculty and administration of SEU. (See the appendix for the diary entry form). We also conducted a textual analysis of documents prepared by SEU and its accrediting agency. The following section provides data about the kinds of structures that were identified during the case study and textual analyses.

Textual analysis of formal structures. In the textual analysis, we examined a self-study report produced by SEU and the response to it written by consultants working for the accrediting agency. The university had been required by the agency to implement a governing process operating with clearly defined structures and procedures that provide for faculty involvement (Roweton & Williams, 1998). The university responded to this requirement by changing the appointment of faculty to standing committees and making administrative members non-voting members of curriculum, general education, and graduate committees (Self-study Report, 1998). Another formal governing structure instituted by the university was the Annual Forum on Governance where faculty and administration respond to the progress of campus committees. It also instituted a communication process that requires committees to report to the Faculty Senate rather than reporting to administration as they traditionally did in the past (Self-study Report, 1998). The Self-study Report also described processes for reporting actions taken by committees: The Faculty Senate reports to the President and the personnel, planning, university affairs, and budget committees report to the Faculty Senate. In the Evaluation

Report, the consultants stated that the Self-study Report showed evidence that a distribution of formal communication structures to ensure faculty involvement were in place.

Field research of informal structures. Although the Self-study and Evaluation Reports define formal structures of the governing process at SEU, they do not recognize informal activities that occur most often on an unpredictable basis. While conducting the observations and interviews, we learned that a great deal of collaboration, idea sharing, and decision making happen among members of the university in informal settings. During these random moments of collaboration, university issues are incrementally dealt with in someone's office, in doorways, on the telephone, through electronic mail, in transit to formal meetings, in transit to classes, and so forth. One interviewee offered this statement about the importance and frequency of this kind of collaborating: "I am convinced that all real problems are solved in informal meetings. By the time formal meetings take place, they are simply used to confirm what took place in informal gatherings."

This current study on shared governance supports other researchers who suggest that a great deal of organizational business is conducted in informal meetings. For example, Stamps (1998), reporting on the work of a group of ethnographers researching a high technology company, argued that the vast majority of corporate knowledge is the information that is shared or created in face to face conversations among workers. In other research about the importance of informal meetings, Merrell (1979) defined temporary, intimate, work-oriented encounters between two or more people conferring to get something done as huddling. He pointed out that huddling goes on all around us and

that people working in huddles usually accomplish the most significant work in organizations. Boden (1984) claimed that informal meetings are the most pervasive forms of social action in organizations and stressed that they are of paramount importance in the process of organizational decision making.

The following diary entries recorded by members of SEU illustrate that instead of governance taking place within a formal network of committees, as described in university documents, it takes place among individuals with individuals in informal situations.

> Entry 1: I talked with Sam Littleton and Byron Smith in Sam's office about the zero level science courses (Phsc 0124). The duration of the meeting was about 15 minutes. We discussed the 0124 syllabi and assessment after the course to determine effectiveness.
>
> Entry 2: Robert and I had a conversation about our Program Review Panel. It was about a five-minute phone conversation. Robert had called and left a message that I return his call regarding the program review panel. The first of many outside reviewer reports had been returned. He asked if I wanted to receive copies of all the reports and if I wished to use the same reviewers to evaluate the resumes. I said that I did wish to do so. We talked about the time line for reviewing the consultants' reports. I mentioned that I will be out of town March 10-12 and suggested that the panel begin its work after spring break.
>
> Entry 3: John walked into my office and asked about a table that he is inserting into a report. He interrupted my work to ask his questions. I stopped typing on my computer and together we worked out a plan for him. He was including a

table that had too many details. He pulled a chair beside mine so we could both see the paper that he was holding. As he looked on, I took a scrap piece of paper and scribbled a new layout for his table. Together we came up with a way to chunk his data into fewer categories to make the layout look nicer. I didn't have an answer to his problem when he first approached me and neither did he. But as we talked we came up with a solution.

These kinds of informal meetings happen among people who have knowledge or expertise with the problem or task at hand. They may occur because the parties within a given location are working on a common problem. A relevant feature of this kind of collaborative meeting is that it is okay to interrupt the other person's work possibly because the meeting is expected to be a brief encounter. Much of the time, informal meetings happen because someone is seeking assistance or advice from another as in the third diary entry where John interrupts his colleague's work to seek her advice on his project. In this meeting, the focus of their conversation is the paper that John is holding. It is in contrast to what would typically occur in a formal meeting where all participants might have a copy of the document in question. Because of the spontaneity of informal meetings, looking on and sharing are normal ways of interacting.

Theoretical Analysis of the Reciprocal Nature of Formal and Informal Meetings

Similar to the description of bona fide groups (Putnam & Stohl, 1990; 1996) previously mentioned, a relevant feature of informal work gatherings is their relationship to the formal structures of the organization. Informal and formal meetings are a matter of reciprocal context, each potentially providing thematically relevant information for the other (Mangrum, Wieder. & Fairley, 1998). While some informal meetings can stand

alone with no connection to formal meetings, most occur against a backdrop of meetings of many different kinds (e.g., assessment, planning, budget, program review meetings, etc.). Many informal meetings occur as individuals organize committees, select members, and schedule meetings. They often occur before the beginning or after the end of formal meetings. They can even happen around conference tables during other meetings, for instance, in one meeting that we observed, two members from the committee that was meeting were discussing issues from another committee while waiting for the current meeting to convene.

Entries 4 and 5 illustrate the reciprocal nature of formal and informal meetings by showing that a common purpose of the informal ones is bringing committee members up to date on what took place in other meetings.

> Entry 4: I talked about three minutes in the hallway by the elevators to Dean Mitchell and Ernest. Earlier that morning, I left Mitchell a voice mail about what our committee is doing and that we had another meeting scheduled. After I came down from the stairs, I ran into him. Before I could ask him about my voice mail, he said I got your message. I briefly explained that I was concerned that our group was taking too much time. He said it was fine because the other subcommittee was still working.
>
> Entry 5: I talked with Jim about our serving on a team to rank order consultants for Program Review. Jim missed the formal program review meeting with the Vice-president, so I picked up the packet of information that he and I needed. I called him on the phone to make plans to get the packet to him. This phone call was fairly short about 2 or 3 minutes. Immediately after our phone call, a student

worker came to get the packet. A few minutes later, Jim calls me back to talk about the packet of information. At the end of this second phone call, we agreed to review and rank order the resumes then get together and add our scores. Jim also told me that he had already spoken with Judy and with Robert about what took place in the program review meeting.

Communication Model of Shared Governance

To create a more comprehensive picture of shared governance, we formulated a model that describes communication processes occurring among faculty and others in both formal and informal meetings. The reason for undertaking this task is in response to concerns of other research that suggests governance systems haphazardly evolve without deliberate planning and that institutions leave communication processes subject to interpretation (Allen and Glickman, 1992; Gollattscheck, 1985; Guffey and Rampp, 1997; and Mims and Newbill, 1995). A consideration that we add to previous studies is that traditional models of shared decision-making overlook the reciprocal nature of formal and informal communication processes. While the textual analysis of the reports indicate that formal governance structures are clearly defined at SEU, the analyses of the interviews and diary entries support that a relevant and ongoing feature of governance is the informal meetings conducted by members of the university as they go about doing university business. he model will draw attention to the need to encourage faculty and others to reevaluate the importance that everyday talk plays in decision making and to utilize informal channels to support communication activities in the formal structures (see figure 1 for the model).

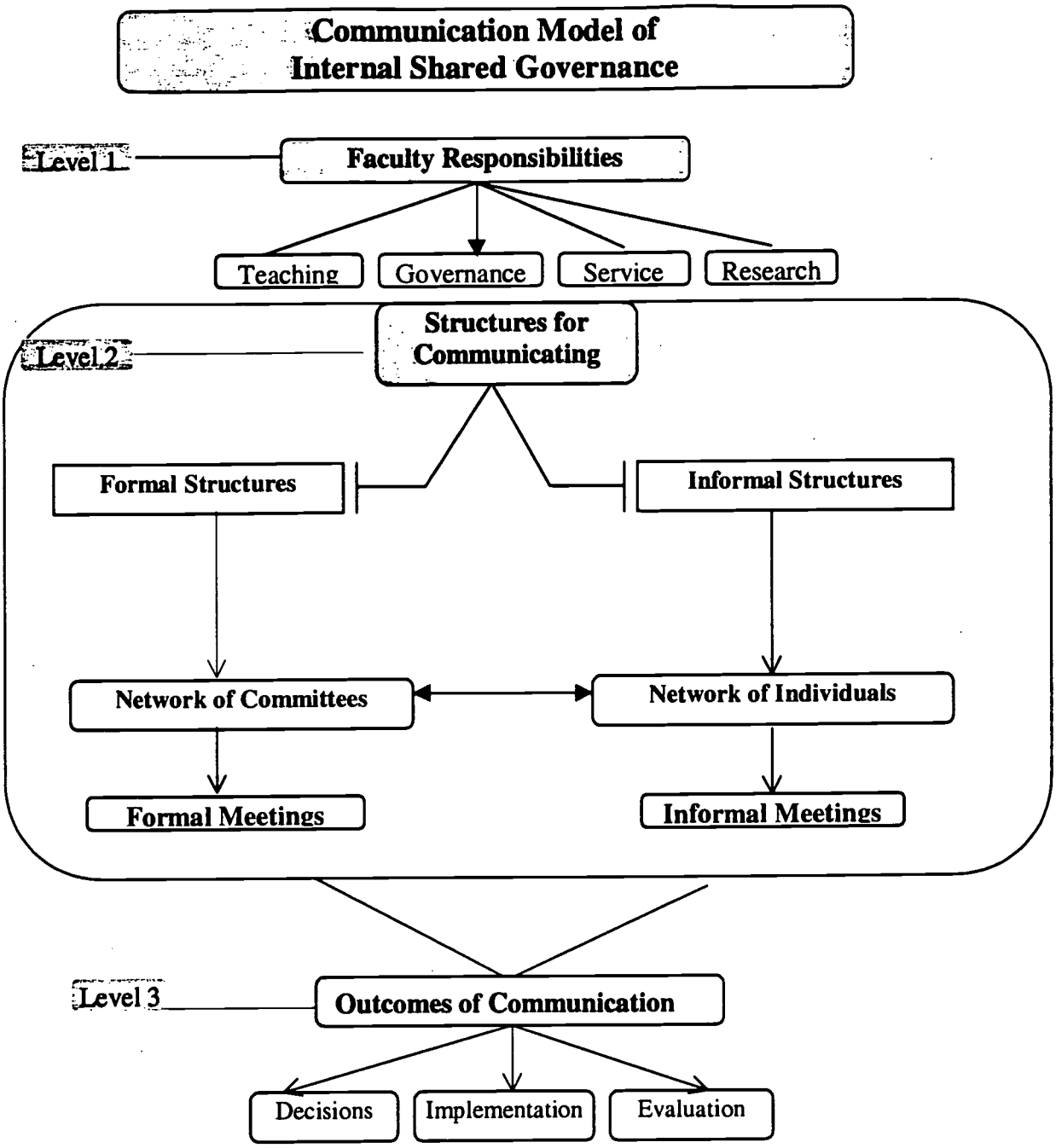

Figure 1 Communication Model of Shared Governance

Levels of the Model

Faculty responsibilities. This communication model of shared governance does not attempt to account for external structures involved with universities such as state governments, boards of regents, and student governments, but focuses on the role of faculty. It first draws attention to the idea that governance is a responsibility co-existing with the other traditional faculty responsibilities of teaching, service, and scholarship. According to Mahon (1994), participatory types of governance are time consuming and that these large time commitments place additional burdens on faculty, taking away from their historical roles as instructor and researcher.

This level is added to the model to address weaknesses identified in SEU's evaluation report written by members of the accrediting agency who stressed that a balance among the different faculty responsibilities was needed at the university (Roweton & Williams, 1998). Putting governance under service diminishes the role of faculty participation in policy decisions that determine the direction of the university. This level is important because it distinguishes governance responsibilities from service that can include many things such as sponsoring student organizations and serving on homecoming committees.

Structures for communicating. The next level of the model indicates that shared governance systems consist of both formal and informal structures. Formal structures are components of the university (e. g., administrative offices, presidents, deans, faculty senates, advisory committees, students, operating rules, expectations, scheduled meetings, agendas, policies, assigned topics) that have been defined in written documents and agreed upon by constituencies of the university. Clearly defined formal structures

such as Faculty Senate and operating procedures are required by external accrediting agencies. In fact, the Self-Study Report written by SEU was a requirement by its accrediting agency to provide proof that it had structures in place that ensured faculty participation in governance.

In contrast, informal structures such as the unplanned, unscheduled work gatherings described in the previous section are neither clearly defined orally nor written in documents; neither do external agencies require them as proof of participation. Paradoxically, while these structures are seldom defined or stated in organizational charts or job descriptions, members of the organization are aware that they exist and can talk about them. Possibly the reason that universities and accrediting agencies overlook the pervasiveness of informal communication activities is the strong influence of bureaucratic models that placed a great deal of importance on written and formal means of communicating. By adding informal structures to the model, we imply that they should be recognized, encouraged, and incorporated with informal governance structures.

The communication model delineates who talks to whom about what topic in what kind of setting. Processes utilized by formal structures involve a network of committees associated with administration, Faculty Senate, and other structures, who work together to accomplish the goals of shared governance. These committees follow formal guidelines for conducting university business. Often, these guidelines explain how committees are related in that they engage in tasks that affect the others and the decisions of one committee is monitored and/or implemented by another. As an example, the function of the General Education Committee (GEC) at SEU is to provide leadership in developing and evaluating the general education curriculum (Academic Policies and

Procedures Manual, 1999). Any recommendation by the GEC must be submitted to the Academic Council and the GEC will work with the appropriate faculty committee and/or administrative office to ensure the continuation and assessment of the general education program. Another definitive characteristic of the network of committees is that they have established memberships. At SEU, the faculty senate or administration selects members for university committees, publishes a list identifying this membership, and distributes the list to each member of the university.

Formal meetings. The most prominent method of communicating for the committee networks is a clearly defined meeting system where committee members interact in formal settings to deliver information, analyze problems, choose courses of action, make recommendations, approve recommendations, and implement decisions. These meetings are scheduled in advance, announced in writing, and structured around printed agendas. They have established membership, assigned leaders, and often begin with a head count of who is present and who is absent (Mangrum, 1996). Asymmetrical relationships typically exist between the designated chair and members of the committees in that the status of the participants affects the method for interacting (Linell & Luckman, 1991). A great deal of the talk performed in the formal meetings is the creation of written documents that provide an account of their actions, decisions, and plans.

Informal meetings. A less definitive feature of shared governance systems involves informal meetings. Although it has been commonly accepted that formality in university settings has distanced faculty from each other, we find the opposite to be true and that a great deal of collaborating among faculty and others does exist, particularly in mundane, commonplace, gatherings where they often discuss governance issues. As

previously stated, we expand the concept of "informal meeting" to include any gathering of workers or members of an organization who assemble together informally and deliberately in an attempt to solve the problems of the organization. We label these gatherings as Informal Problem Solving (IPS) Meetings (cf. Mangrum, 1996; Mangrum & Wieder, 1997; Mangrum, Wieder, & Fairley, 1998).

A relevant feature of IPS meetings involves leadership actions that can be performed by any of the participants. While formal meetings have fixed leaders who typically control the flow of discussion and acknowledge who may be the next speaker, leadership in informal meetings is fluid and moves from person to person in a conversational turn-taking manner (cf. Mangrum & Mangrum, 1999). It is not based on hierarchical positions, but is a function of such conversational accomplishments as initiating new topics, offering interpretations or clarifications, keeping the conversation from going astray, performing procedural talk, and closing the conversation.

Because IPS Meetings do not have formal guidelines such as agendas or parliamentary procedures for opening or closing a meeting, bringing topics of discussion to the floor or earning the right to an extended turn of talk must be interactionally achieved with conversational devices. Unlike formal meetings, where participants are allowed extended amounts of time to formulate uninterrupted turns or claims about the problem or solution, participants in informal meetings must incrementally formulate their claims about the problem with the collaboration of other participants involved in the meeting. The individual who is responsible for the task at hand typically initiates informal meetings. More often than not, the purpose of the informal meeting is to make sense of some increment of a problem or a decision to be made.

Outcomes of meetings. Level three of the communication model details the links between formal and informal structures of governance systems. These links involve university goals that can be accomplished in both formal and informal meetings. The outcome most commonly associated with governance is the process of making decisions concerning issues such as budgets, curriculum, program review, planning and assessment (Self-study Report, 1998). A committee member who assisted in writing the Self Study Report for SEU defined shared governance as "the process put in place to give everybody an opportunity to have a say in it before any decisions are made." Requirements for achieving this outcome are usually outlined in documents published by organizations such as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education that ask universities seeking accreditation to show "dependendable information to the institution's constituencies and involve them in decision-making processes" (NCA Overview, 1999).

Another outcome of formal and informal meetings encompasses the notion of moving beyond the decision making phase to implementing the decisions. Allen and Glickman (1992), stated that when one makes a decision and/or develops a policy there remains an obligation to see that the policy is properly implemented. Likewise, the communication model presented in this study implies that there should be a well-defined strategy for including implementation steps in shared governance systems. Formal decision processes are usually planned for and described in university documents, but in terms of implementation, this is not the case. In the Self-Study Report written by SEU, there is a flow chart explaining the steps of decision processes by listing inputs into the process such as faculty senate charges, faculty initiatives, and administrative requests, and the outputs such as administrative actions, faculty senate recommendations, and

committee modifications. Of the ten levels of actions described in the flow chart, only the last one addresses implementation and it simply states "implementation occurs exit process."

The final outcome listed in level three of the communication model involves monitoring the effectiveness of the decision making and implementation processes. Again, the interviews with members of SEU and other literature revealed that a weakness existed at this level of shared governance. Formal documents prepared at SEU show that a system for monitoring progress and decisions made by committees, in a sense, does exist. For instance, reports from each are passed to other committees (e. g., the assessment committee provides reports to the Faculty Senate). What are not included in their documents, however, are specific methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the shared governance process. A dean at SEU suggested that "assessing the system should be part of an ongoing planning process where you look at what worked, what did not work, and where do you go from there." According to Gollattscheck (1985), all constituencies should be involved in constant monitoring in terms of where recommendations go, who handles them, and who is effective at it. Questions should be asked about whether or not members of the institution are satisfied with the existing system.

Discussion

The communication model first shows that governance is a responsibility that faculty should balance with teaching and scholarship. The two types of structures that exist in order to accomplish the sharing of governance are the formal and informal. The formal structures are defined in university documents as well as in statements from

accrediting agencies. Informal structures are not defined and less understood by all involved, but nonetheless play an important role in the governance process. The second level indicates that formal structures consist of networks of committees with pre-established memberships and procedures for accomplishing tasks and reporting progress. In contrast, the informal structures consist of networks of individuals who interact in informal meetings that are typically assembled by someone who needs to make sense of a situation. The third level of the communication model draws attention to the primary goals of both the formal and informal meetings (e.g., decisions, implementation, and evaluation). The communication model shows that in some cases more attention should be drawn to the need to focus on informal communication processes, in other cases as with the fourth level, attention should be given to more formal structures.

The purpose of this article has been to highlight the processes utilized by faculty and administrators to accomplish the goals of the shared governance philosophy. Obviously, if faculty perceptions are only partially true, further research should be devoted to the study of informal meetings in academic organizations. The nature and impact of informal meetings appear to be just as important as the formal, but are not addressed by the AAUP or by external accrediting agencies. It is important that any linkages and influence that informal meetings have over formal ones be discovered and critically examined. The communication model of shared governance offered in this study provides a starting point for looking at informal meetings in the university setting.

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Appendix

Diary Entry for IPS Meetings

Subject of Conversation:

Participants:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Type of Meeting: Phone Call Face to Face Interaction E-mail

Place: Office Doorway Hallway Other_____

Time:

Duration:

Diary Entry:

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Signature: C W Mangrum	Printed Name/Position/Title: Faye Gothard Mangrum, Assoc. Professor	
Organization/Address: Dept. of Communication Southeastern OK. ST. Durant, OK 74701	Telephone: (580)745-2558	Fax: (580)745-7476
	E-mail Address: fmangrum@sosu.edu	Date: Feb. 23, 2001

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